



The South India **CHURCHMAN**

The Magazine of the Church of South India

● NOVEMBER 1995

"Train up a child in the way he should go...."
(Proverbs 22:6)

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The Magazine of the Church of South India

NOVEMBER 1995

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25 Years Ago !!

We were thrilled to discover that this evangelist campaign was not merely campaign so-called, but a revival for the church. We started with misgivings about the success of our new move, but God's Grace has been granted abundantly and at the closing service thanksgiving on the 20th night a solemn stillness at peace and exaltation filled our hearts when our past Rev. C.S. Vethakkan brought home to us how he was becoming conscious of the Holy Spirit visibly working through the Church of South India, during that week particular—the Old Apostolic Church came back into life—indeed to us of little faith !

—A.C. DHARMARAJ
Churchman 1975

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Rabin, A Martyr for Peace

The news that Mr. Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli Prime Minister was shot dead by a rightwing extremist on Saturday the 11th of November rocked the whole world. He was assassinated at the end of a largely attended peace rally organised in support of his peace policies with Palestinians and Jordan. Man who was struggling to achieve lasting peace in West Asia, man who received the most prestigious award, the Nobel Prize for Peace, had to be killed by the advocates of the gun culture. What a tragedy ! Communal frenzy and fracticial violence have reached such a proportion that they have relegated all other vital issues confronting the nation to oblivion. This heinous act of terrorism is a sad reflection of our sick society.

Leaders and heads of State and governments worldwide have expressed shock and deep sorrow over the assassination. They termed Mr. Rabin as a great statesman and man of peace who gave his life trying to bring peace in West Asia through his wisdom and vision.

The historic peace treaty, signed on September 13, 1993, on the White House Lawns, and sealed by Mr. Arafat warmly shaking hands with Mr. Rabin, paved the way for concluding peace with hostile countries in the Israel neighbourhood. Mr. Rabin and his intrepid foreign Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres, travelled to country after enemy country, signing treaties or initiating peace moves with Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. Last month when Mr. Rabin signed the Taba treaty granting more autonomy to Palestine, West Asia had become a completely changed place.

In the complicated world of Israeli politics, where the ruling Labour party, to which the assassinated Prime Minister belonged, and the opposition Likud, which is represented among others by Mr. Peres, Mr. Rabin did not hesitate to pull out of government if the Israelis were not prepared to agree for the peace through the diplomatic negotiations. This has divided the country rather deeply

and the opposition to the peace policies was mounting up. But, as the Peace rally on Saturday where Mr. Rabin spoke for the last time showed, there is no shortage of support in Israel for the peace moves. And the United States will always be there to help the process. In flying the U.S. flag at half mast over the White House to mourn the death of Rabin, the U.S. indicated how deeply it is committed to the process of peace. A staunch ally of Israel over the troubled decades, Mr. Bill Clinton's visible shock and anguish will no doubt be shared by the states for which the success in West Asia represented the sole foreign policy victory amidst the ashes of Bosnia and Somalia. Indeed, the entire world - hardline Jewish organisations and Arab extremist groups apart - has expressed great sadness over the loss that Israel has suffered.

In the Indian context, the pain is deeper. It was with Rabin's Israel that India, for long a supporter of the Arab cause, established diplomatic contact under Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao. The importance that Israel gives to India could be gauged by the fact that Mr. Rabin sent Mr. Peres to India soon after diplomatic ties were re-established. Israel has offered much technical assistance especially in the areas of defence and agriculture. India which has lost two Prime Ministers, Mrs. Indira Gandhi and Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, to terrorist violence, fully shares the grief over the loss suffered by Israel.

If the P.L.O., Jordan, Syria and Lebanon all sworn enemies of Israel - today salute Mr. Rabin on his death, it is as much a tribute to the vision of the man who fought for peace. Mr. Rabin's end came about much like Mahatma Gandhi's, shot dead by his own countryman who differed with his quest for lasting peace. In his death, as in the last few years. Mr. Rabin will hopefully have paved the way for that elusive peace. That peace, as Mr. Clinton, with choked voice and close to tears, said, 'must be, will be, his lasting legacy', the finest epitaph for 'a soldier of peace and a martyr for peace'.

DASS BABU

Peaceful Resolution of the Conflict

*REV. DR. M. MANI CHACKO, *Madras*

Introduction

'Peace' and 'Conflict' are words which we are very familiar with. No single day passes without a report of an event of conflict somewhere in the globe and the efforts to peace that are being made to resolve that conflict. Be it in Northern Ireland, or in the Middle East or in Bosnia or in Africa or in India, there are often conflicts and thanks to God and those stalwarts of peace who are determined to find a solution to conflicts from time to time.

The Hebrew Understanding of 'Peace'

'Peace' is a complex concept. In the Old Testament 'peace' is a powerful theological term. The Hebrew word for 'peace' is *Sālōm*. It is derived from a root that conveys the image of wholeness, unity and harmony-something that is complete and sound. The word *Sālōm* occurs more than two hundred times in the OT. Out of this, in almost fifty occurrences, the emphasis lies on the absence of strife or conflict. To cite one example, the tension and antagonism that had developed between Isac's servants and the people of Abimelech, a Philistine king, were resolved with a feast and a treaty after which the people of Abimelech 'left him in peace' (Gen. 21 : 31). It also has the connotation of a lack of international strife, as well as the beneficial effect of such peace on a nation's citizens. 'During Solomon's lifetime Judah and Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, lived in safety, each man under his own vine and fig tree' (1 Kings 4 : 25). This is the blessing that came from having 'peace on all sides' (vs. 24).

In addition to the above usage with its focus on interpersonal harmony, the concept does expand to refer to an individual's or a nation's welfare. For example, when the prophet Elisha saw a close friend hurrying to him, he sent his servants to greet her with a series of questions; 'Are you all right (*Sālōm*)? Is your husband all right (*Sālōm*)? Is your child all right (*Sālōm*)?

(2 Kings 4 : 26). Thus, health, personal fulfillment, and prosperity are all inherent in the concept of peace. In the occurrences where Salom is used as greeting, the underlying notion is the recipient's welfare.

The concept, in almost two-thirds of its occurrences in the OT, expresses the fulfillment that comes to human beings when they experience God's presence. Psalms and the Prophetic literature are full of examples of this dimension of Peace. David, fleeing from Absalom during that son's rebellion, felt intense pressure (Ps. 4 : 1-2). But David fixed his thoughts on God and remembered the joy that came with trust in him. Enjoying a sense of comfort and security, David concluded 'I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety' (4 : 8). In the prophetic books, resulting from this dependence on God, God not only brings an inner harmony and peace to those who live in right relationship with him but he also intends to bring peace to the nations. The prophets promised the coming of a 'Prince of Peace' (Isa. 9 : 6) and awaited the day when 'of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end' (vs. 7). In Isa. 32 : 16-17, we read further that when the Messiah comes to establish his kingdom, 'the fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence for ever. My people will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest' (Isa. 32 : 16-17). However, it also needs to be noted that, Isaiah 48 depicts the absence of peace as God's anger at Israel's failure to follow his commandments; had people attended to them, Isaiah asserts, Israel would have had peace 'like a river', 'righteousness like the waves of the Sea'.

Thus Peace, in the OT, speaks of the blessing of inner and outer harmony that comes to a person or people who live in close relationship to God.

The New Testament Understanding of 'Peace'

The Greek word is *Eirēnē*. In its original sense, it refers to that orderly, prosperous life that is possible when there is no war. It is only later did the concept assume

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the connotation of an inner, personal peace, which is reflected in almost ninety occurrences of the term. But here again, 'Peace' is something rooted in one's relationship with God and testifies to the restoration of human beings to inner harmony and also to harmonious relationship with others.

This broader understanding of 'Peace' is particularly reflected in the person and work of Jesus. Jesus inaugurated his ministry with the dictum, 'The kingdom of God is at hand' (Mk. 1 : 15). As the ethic for this new age he proclaimed meekness, righteousness, mercy, and peacemaking (Mt. 5 : 3-10). Going beyond, Jesus asked his followers to love not only one another but also their enemies (Mt. 5 : 43-47); (Lk. 6 : 32-36), and to meet wrong and injustice and even violence with forgiveness, prayer, and blessings for the enemy and attempts at reconciliation (Mt. 5 : 38-42; Lk. 6 : 27-30). All this is in clear continuity with the concept of 'peace' found in the OT, where the achievement of a just, righteous and tranquil life in community was depicted and expected.

Issues

Two issues are often raised when one thinks of 'peace'. Is this 'peace' of God to be realized through efforts to achieve transformation of the society or is this peace only to be experienced inwardly through the transformation of an individual's heart by the presence of God? The other issue is the relation of non-violence to peace-whether the achievement of peace requires non-violence as a precondition, or whether it may be secured by violent means ?

Embracing the life of a hermit or monasticism was a measure some adopted to experience this peace of God. But the Christian notion of peace is not simply the absence of war. God's anger, in the OT, was often manifested in a war that chastised and purified Israel. A look at the concept of the 'Just war' tradition is in order here. Three features could be gathered from the biblical tradition on this motif. First, *its cause must be righteous*. Its objective must be to secure justice, to protect the innocent or champion human rights. The intention must be as righteous as the cause. Secondly, *its means must be controlled*. There must be no unnecessary violence. Thirdly, *its outcome must be predictable*. There must be a calculated prospect of victory, and so of achieving the just cause for which the war was begun. Thus there is a very cautious warrant for righteous violence, if I may put it that way, to achieve a just cause, in the biblical tradition. On the contrary, there are others who project the Sermon on the Mount and advocate non-violence in achieving peace. They adopt a pacifist position. So the tension remains. But what is

unanimously agreed upon is, God desires peace and one should strive hard for the same.

It is at this juncture, I would like to dwell on the theme 'Peaceful Resolution of the Conflict' from the story of Exodus.

The Story

The main plot of this epic is clear : The sons of Jacob increase miraculously in accordance with the divine promise (Gen. 12) to become a mighty people. However, the new Egyptian king who had no knowledge for Israel's privileged position in the past, decided to check Israel's expansion by taking a series of counter measures against them, seeing them as a threat. Thus a conflict develops. It is in the course of the Egyptian government's counter measures against the further expansion of these people that the baby Moses is born and saved from possible murder. Incidents between the Egyptian and the Hebrews, in which Moses identifies with the Hebrews, later force him to flee into the desert peninsula, where he experiences a divine revelation and is given the task of resolving the conflict and leading his people out of Egypt. The Pharaoh's obdurate attitude in letting Moses and his people is broken by a series of fearful plagues. Moses and his people are able to leave the country. The Egyptian troop which pursued them is exterminated at the Reed Sea, thus opening the way for the emigrants to the promised goal of entering a land flowing with milk and honey. The people under the leadership of Moses journeyed to Mount Sinai where they entered solemnly into covenant with Yahweh.

This is, in a nutshell, the story of the Exodus. This is indeed a story of conflict - conflict between two peoples - Egyptians and Israelites; conflict between two persons - Pharaoh and Moses; conflict between two gods - Pharaoh, the divine and Yahweh.

The Conflict

(a) Conflict between Egyptians and Israelites

In Ex. 1 : 8, we read : 'Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph'. This statement has got revolutionary implications. That was the time when Egypt was undergoing radical social changes. According to Biblical Scholars, this was a time when the native Egyptian rulers were able to restore their own kingdom from the hands of the Asiatic Kings, the Hyksos. The Hyksos were semites and they were friendly with the Israelites. They were overthrown from power by the native Egyptian rulers ca. 1550 B.C. A new dynasty came to power and as a result the situation of Israel had changed. The changed political situation brought severe oppression. The native Egyptian ruling class were not friendly with the Israelites. They did not want to accept who were not

part of them. So there was an ethnic problem which, in turn, led to the denial of human rights, forced labour, exploitation, population control, and genocide.

The Exodus text projects a threat to the Hebrews as a people (1 : 8-22) and a threat to one particular Hebrew, Moses (2 : 1-10), the reason being simply to counter Israelite proliferation, lest they themselves should become a threat to Pharaoh. As the first attempt to deal with the problem of Israelite proliferation, Pharaoh proposes to 'deal wisely' with the Israelites. The two modes of oppression, undertaken by Egyptians, those of *affliction* (vs. 11-12) and *service* (vs. 13-14), turn out to be futile. The more the Egyptians oppressed them, the more they multiplied and the situation was such that 'they were afraid of the Israelites' (vs. 12).

Having failed to solve the problem of proliferation, Pharaoh launches his second attempt by issuing the decree of death to the 'Hebrew Midwives', Shiphrah and Pauh. One problem that confronts the reader is the ambiguity regarding the identity of the midwives. Does Pharaoh speak to the Hebrew midwives or to the midwives of the Hebrews? To phrase the question differently, are the midwives Hebrew or Egyptian? On the one hand there is the view that Pharaoh would not have trusted Hebrew woman to carry out his command, but on the other hand, reliance on Hebrew women could be taken as an example of Pharaoh's folly. Whatever their identity may be the midwives, by their act of defiance, appear as givers of life: they 'let the boys live' (vs. 17). The question of Pharaoh, 'why have you done this thing?' (vs. 18), does not arise out of curiosity but takes the form of an accusation. The response of the midwives not only upsets Pharaoh but manages to poke fun at Egyptian women: unlike Egyptian women, the Hebrew woman are vigorous and are delivered before the midwife arrives (vs. 19). Thus Pharaoh is frustrated a second time in his effort to control Hebrew growth.

As a third attempt, Pharaoh issues the directive to 'all his people' (vs. 22): "Every son that is born you shall throw into the Nile, but let every daughter live". It should be read 'Every son born to the Hebrews' as witnessed by the Septuagint and the Targum. Its omission in the Hebrew text produces a humorous result that in his anxiety to include 'all', the Pharaoh forgets the most important thing of all, to exclude Egyptian male infants. The irony is, Pharaoh's daughter herself does precisely the opposite of Pharaoh's command, and takes care of the baby Moses.

Thus Pharaoh's three attempts to influence the course of history fail, the midwives' fear of God, the princess's compassion, the resourcefulness of Moses' mother and the

quick thinking of his sister, all work together to overcome the evil designs of the king of Egypt.

(b) Conflict between Pharaoh and Moses

Moses approaches Pharaoh with the words, 'Let my people go that they may serve me'. And we see frequently in a number of references (Ex. 4 : 21; 7:3; 9:12; 10: 20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8, 17) that God himself hardens the heart of Pharaoh, and, because of this hardening Pharaoh continues to refuse to let the Israelites go from the bondage. This deterministic view of the relationship between God and man has puzzled theologians, and, because of this, considerable attempts have been made to interpret the motif of 'hardening'. U.Cassuto has asserted that this is 'the way in which the ancient Hebrew expresses itself as it was customary to attribute every phenomenon to the direct action of God (1 Sam. 1 : 5; Ex. 2 : 13) S.I. Driver, though he agrees with U.Cassuto, has cogently expressed his belief that God, especially in his dealing with his agents, does not act arbitrarily. He only hardens those who begin by hardening themselves. It would be inconsistent with the character of a righteous God, if he were to harden those whose hearts were turned toward him. The Pharaoh, he argues, from the very outset in the exodus story, appears as a self - willed, obstinate man who persistently hardens himself against God. The stubbornness of Pharaoh leads them into conflict. The conflict which arose out of fear of proliferation between two peoples is now seen reflected between two persons - Pharaoh and Moses.

(c) Conflict between Pharaoh the god and Yahweh

The story of Exodus assumes a religious polemical intention especially when it is noted that the Egyptian king was himself regarded as a god with a claim to comparability because of his relation with the sun - god. Thus the contest in the liberation of Israel is between Yahweh and the god king of Egypt. As C.J. Labuschagn has observed, 'it was not only because he was the ruler of Egypt he is represented as Yahweh's adversary in the dramatic contest to free Israel but also because he was known as a god, having control not only over the Egyptian but also over Yahweh's people whom he oppressed and enslaved. Because of this and because of the fact that he showed contempt for Yahweh (5 : 2), it was felt that Pharaoh in particular had to acknowledge that there is one like Yahweh (8 : 6; 9 : 14)' (*The Incomparability of Yahweh* p. 75). This conflict is clearly visible in the plagues. There is an element of mockery of Egyptian gods reflected in the plague episode. To cite one example, the turning of water in the Nile to blood is a case in point. The Egyptians had personified and deified the river and regarded the river as god with the name Hapi, who

means 'to flow, to run'. As a river god, Hapi was pictured as a bearded man with female breasts and a hanging stomach to signify fertility. There are also hymns praising the river god as issuing from the earth and coming to keep Egypt alive. (J.B. Pritchard, Ed. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*). Yet in the biblical narrative, there is a tone of mockery of this belief of the Egyptians when '....all the water in the Nile became blood. The fish that were in the Nile died and the river stank and the Egyptians were not able to drink water from the Nile....' (7 : 20-21), all

by mere striking the water with a rod at God's command (7 : 20b). The sole purpose of this event is clearly stated: Pharaoh is to know 'that I am Yahweh' (7 : 17).

Thus the conflict which arose of out of fear became a conflict of power struggle. The question became 'where does the power lay?'. This conflict brings in alienation, disturbance hardships etc. among the people.

(to be continued:.....)

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The Way of the Cross*

MRS. JOSEPHINE AZARIAH, Madras

My dear mothers and sisters in Christ, I greet you in the Sovereign Name of Jesus, the son of Mother Mary. We are celebrating the WOMEN'S FESTIVAL WEEK, for the 6th year in succession that started with the Women's Sunday on 13th August and Women's Rally from 18th to 20th August, 1995. Eventhough only 1,500 women will be able to participate in our Rally representing 106 Pastorates and 50,000 women in our Diocese, I am sure all the sisters in our families, congregations and institutions will organise and partake in many events and programmes during these festival days, atleast by praying for the same. Our festival theme is:

'The sufferings of Mother Mary helped her son Jesus to save the world; The sufferings of mothers and sisters help their daughters and sons to serve in the world'.

Let us consider the meaning, significance and outcome of our theme. The New Testament mostly consists of the letters of St. Paul. He persecuted the church before his conversion. But, after the vision of the Risen Lord Jesus Christ, he was transformed to be an incomparable disciple of Christ. He remained a bachelor, experienced sufferings like Christ and was killed as a martyr in about 63 A.D. We can easily say that the early church was built upon the foundations of the efforts of St. Paul. Such an experienced saint is convinced of the service through the way of the cross. He says, 'I have fought a good fight, run the race and kept my faith' (II Tim. 4:7) 'for this Gospel I am bound and experience sufferings like a criminal' (II Tim. 2:9). 'If we tolerate the sufferings with Jesus we can also reign with him' (II Tim. 2:12). He affirms and reaffirms that there is no other way for Christians except the way of the cross. And he also put forward be basic condition of a christian life. 'Moreover, whosoever has the mind to live the devotion/spirituality of Jesus Christ is bound to receive persecutions' (II Tim. 3:12). St. Paul is able to say this, on the basis our Lord Jesus' teaching through the sermon on the mount in Mathew 5:10. 'Blessed are those who suffer for righteousness; for their is the kingdom of heaven,' and 'whosoever is not willing to take up his cross and follow me cannot be may disciple' (Luke 14:27). Jesus also

indicates the possible sufferings for his disciples. 'I sending you, like the lambs into the wolves' (Matt. 10:16). Therefore, only when we live by the way of the cross Christ, the lamb of God that takes away the sins of world, we can be true disciples of Christ (Mark 10:45).

But long before Christ and St. Paul, Mother Mary 'blessed of all Women' had realised and experienced basic mandate of life viz. 'the way of the cross' (Lk 1:28).

Seven Crosses of Mary

I remember reading an article, 'Seven Crosses of Mary'. Her first experience of cross came when Mary met the angel Gabriel (Luke 1:26-38). Womenfolk easily understand this. Isn't it a cross experience, a virgin becoming pregnant? And the abuses, scandals, medical worries and anxieties that Mary had to bear.

Her second cross-experience came when prophet Simeon while blessing the baby Jesus on the 8th day in the temple of Jerusalem said 'a sword will pierce your soul' (Luke 2:35).

Her third cross-experience came, when the 12 year old boy Jesus was missing from the group and the answer of Jesus given to a loving mother (Luke 2:41).

The shocking unbearable experience of the cross came to Mary when 30 year old son Jesus answered his mother very rudely 'Woman, what does your concern have to do with me? My hour has not yet come' (John 2:4).

Fifthly, unlike other youngsters, Jesus with his band of disciples went about walking into villages and towns teaching the Good News of the Kingdom and performed many miracles. But unfortunately he was branded as a magician, a representative of the demons and a mad character. Therefore, his mother and brothers went to Capernaum in order to meet him and take him back home. When someone said, your mother and brothers are here seeking you, Jesus responded saying who is my mother? Who are my brothers? And pointing at the people seated around him we told him to say these are my mother and brothers (Mark 3:31-35). This experience of Mary is an adequate evidence of her cross experience.

When Salome the sister of Mary went to Jesus beseeching him to grant honourable seats in

*This message was given at the Women's Rally, Madras.

Kingdom, John on the right and James on the left side of Jesus, Jesus happened to explain the kind of suffering and death he had to face. Naturally, this shocking news must have reached Mary and left her in fear and anxiety. Don't you think this was her sixth experience of the cross? Indeed, yes! (Matt. 20:20-28).

Can we not equate the agony in mind and soul of Mary with that of Jesus' sufferings, passion and death? All came in a row within a week's time. This infact was Mary's seventh incomparable and unbearable cross-experience.

Thus, Mother Mary suffered seven types of crosses by denying herself, taking up her cross each day throughout her life. She readily accepted the sufferings of the cross in order to obey and accomplish the promises she made with God while responding to angel Gabriel, saying 'lo, here is the Lord's servant; let it be done to me according to thy word.'

Thus, we are able to come to an understanding that Jesus who had the opportunity to observe the trials and tribulations of his mother Mary right from his childhood and may be, there were occasions when Jesus shed tears with his mother experiencing the sufferings of the cross, and thereby, God convinced that only by bearing the burdens of humanity and serving them by the way of the cross he would be able to save the world. This secret of life is the message that we draw from the first part of our theme.

Let us look into ourselves whether we have learnt the lesson of the cross? Are we teaching everyone of our brothers and sisters whom we meet in our day-to-day lives that message of the cross by word and deed? Our Lord Jesus wants to teach the same lesson to everyone of his disciple, men, women, youth and children. 'Come unto me all that are heavily burdened, I shall give you rest. I am meek and humble; take up my yoke upon you and learn from me; then your souls will get rest. My yoke is easy and my burden is light' (Matt. 11:28-30). 'Whosoever wants to follow me he should deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me; whosoever wants to save his life will lose it and whosoever loses his life for my sake will save it' (Luke 9:23,24).

Therefore, we sisters and mothers are given this special privilege of teaching the lessons of the way of the cross to our children, our family members and colleagues. Don't you think our children, brothers and sisters will be inspired to go into the world and render Christian service to humanity? The Risen Lord Jesus says, 'when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will gain strength and be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and utmost parts of the earth (Acts 1:18).

Glory and honour belong to Jesus Christ, the King of the cross, the Holy Spirit who strengthens us and to God, our Father who loves us all.



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'Turn to God and Rejoice in Hope'*

REV. DR. GNANA ROBINSON, U.T.C. Bangalore

This is going to be the theme for the next assembly of the World Council of Churches and this has been given to me as the theme for our own reflection today. This call for 'turning to God' is not something new; it comes repeatedly in the Bible, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament.

'Turning to God' implies a human condition of 'turning away from God' and turning to someone else or something else. Which we call 'sin'. This 'turning away from God' is caused by human temptation and this temptation, according to Genesis 3, is basically a temptation to become like God. Thus we read in Genesis 3:4 - 'But the Serpent said to the woman, You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God'. The temptation to become like God is the temptation to grab unlimited power, unlimited glory, unlimited pleasure or enjoyment and unlimited intellectual wisdom. This fact is further exemplified in the story of Eve eating the fruit. It is said in Genesis 3:6, 'So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, and he ate'. That 'it was good for food' indicates all human temptations towards physical desires - eating, drinking and merry-making, that 'it was a delight to the eyes' points to all human temptations towards aesthetical desires - art, dance, movies, paintings etc., and that 'it was to be desired to make one wise' indicates the temptation towards intellectual guests. God has provided for all these needs of the humans - the physical needs, the aesthetic needs and the intellectual needs and their limited use according to human needs is justified. But when the human desires go beyond the limit and want to grab unlimited physical, aesthetic and intellectual enjoyments, that is an indication of his/her desire to become like God and that is 'sin' according to the Bible.

In our modern history persons like 'Hitler', the leader of Nazi Germany and 'Idi-Amin', the former President of Uganda' are examples of such fallen human-beings, who projected themselves in the place of God and tried to

grab unlimited power and to acquire all riches and wealth in the world.

The temptation of Jesus, as recorded in Luke 4, is actually the reenactment of the temptation in the garden of Eden. Jesus was first physically tempted when Satan asked him to turn the stone to become bread (4:3); the Second temptation was towards 'authority and glory' in this world, and the price one has to pay for it is compromise with the devil. Surrender to him and worship of him (4:5-7). The third and the final temptation is obviously the temptation to play God. As one acquires power, as one accumulates wealth as on tastes unrestrained authority and glory as a leader, the next consequent temptation is to play oneself God. Satan said to Jesus, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down here'. If you are the Son of God, prove it. Jesus, though he was the Son of God, did not dare to prove it. But many humans try to prove they are gods, they try to demonstrate their authority, power and glory. This is exactly what Hitler and Idi Amin did.

In the New Testament, being with God and being away from God are described with different images-light and darkness, life and death. God and Mammon, reign of God and reign of this world and so on. Turning to God means, turning away from darkness to light, turning away from death to life, turning away from Mammon to God, turning away from the reign of this world to the reign of God.

Turning to God definitely means turning away from the ways of this fallen world. This is exactly where our problem lies. During my 40 years of ministry, I have come across many church leaders who hold that because we are in this world we have to go with the world and we cannot extricate ourselves from the ways of this world, and I have always questioned and challenged this position. Because of this kind of an approach all problems of the world have crept into church-life, electioneering, canvassing, corruption, mal-practice, litigation, conflicts and divisions. I am not talking here of any particular Church; this happens to be reality of the Church all over India. I strongly believe, the call to turn to God is definitely a call to turn away from the ways of this world; it is a call not to conform to the ways of this world.

*Sermon preached at the Thanksgiving Service of the Karnataka Central Diocese of the Church of South India at St. Andrew's church, Bangalore on Sunday, 29th October, 1995

Jesus says, 'You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles, Lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many' (Mark 10:43-45).

'But it shall not be so among you'. It is an imperative from Jesus. Some thirty years back, I wrote and published an article on this verse, challenging some of the practices in the Church of South India, including the electioneering practices, and I still hold on to my position. We Christians who are called to turn to God, cannot still hold on to the ways of this world which are ways of self-seeking, competition, corruption and falsehood. We have to evolve an ethos of love that embraces all, the power of suffering love, the power that suffers pain in order to win others and find ways and means of electing leaders to hold responsibilities in the Church with a sense of christian stewardship and fellowship in love, remembering that we are all members of the one Body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

'It shall not be so among you' is mandatory in our attempt to 'turn to God'. One cannot serve both God and Mammon at the sametime; one cannot follow the ways of this world, and yet be co-worker in the reign of God. You are called to leave 'Mammon', the god of this world and his ways, and turn to God, the God of life.

As a first step towards our turning to God, I may here suggest a threefold move - First, Do not return evil for evil. This is part of the core-teaching of our Lord

(Matt. 5:38-39) and this is the first step towards reconciliation. Returning evil for evil strengthens the force of evil, perpetuates conflict, creates tension and division, and destroys harmony and peace in community. The Second step that follows the first one is 'Forgive one another'. This again is part of the core-teaching of Jesus (Matthew 6:12-15; Ephesians 4:32). Resisting not evil alone will not bring about reconciliation. Forgiving the person who rendered evil to us is important; that is the mark of christian love. Just as God forgives our evil-doings, we also are called to forgive others their evil-doings, whatever they have done to us. This leads us to the third step - 'Accept one another'. St. Paul says in Romans, 'welcome one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God' (Romans 15:7). St. Paul further says, 'May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' (Romans 15:5-6).

As indicated in Matthew 5:23-24 (cf. 1 John 4:20), 'turning to God' implies first 'turning to His people', turning to our brothers and sisters in Christ.

You will admit, it is no secret that there are dissensions and misunderstandings among us. It is my fervent hope and prayer that as a first step towards our turning to God we will turn to our brothers and sisters in Christ, returning no evil for evil, forgiving each other and accepting one another, that we together may, as St. Paul puts it, 'with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ'. This is our hope and we look forward to rejoicing with you in this hope in the days to come. Amen.



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Ministry in an Urban context

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The very nomenclature of the word Minister is to serve. A minister is called and appointed to serve people in a given situation whether it is a city or a village. That is why Jesus has said 'I came not to be served but to serve'. Mark 10:42. Jesus Christ put it in practise. (John 10:1-16, Heb. 13:20). The minister assumes servanthood of the servant Jesus Christ. The Church then, in turn, takes its' image as the servant Church to serve people in the world. The very idea is also seen in human leadership in Church (Matt. 16:18, John 21:15). For we are labourers together with Christ (I Cor. 3:9).

This legacy has been handed over to the church which is His body. The Church in turn commissions its members who are called to serve the people in the world. The Church has been endowed with various Ministries. The work involves both vertical and horizontal direction of the Ministry. Demands and requirements are more for work on the part of the Church 'Harvest is plenty but workers are few' Mt. 9:37. One should be a caring shepherded. (Jn. 2:15-17, Acts 28:29-31, I Pet. 5:2). Hence a question may come to one's mind to ask how do people understand Ministry today in an urban context. Although, it is difficult to offer common solutions nevertheless we should raise questions and find suitable answers.

The ministry in the urban context has become challenging with many complexities and unless one is trained to specialise or learn multiple disciplinaries, he/she cannot fit into the context to deliver goods with satisfaction. When we look at the life in the early Church and the Churches established and addressed by St. Paul, he faced many issues and problems at Rome, Corinth, Epheses etc. Problems took different and varied form from city to city. Yet the early church became a pillar of faith. Whereas it is thoroughly lacking in the present urban Church life in spheres of teaching, preaching and breaking of bread and the prayers (Acts 2:42). The Urban life covers the sub-urban and semi-urban life also. What are the maxims on should be aware of while dealing multifarious activities that go in the life of the Church. One should be aware of the urban set-up, its geo and topography and its very life which is different in many ways. There are industries, factories and commerce combined with a peculiar social

and religious life. New ventures and projects come up overnight by private enterpruneurs, and multinationals. Because of this changing scenario it brings with it many new systems.

What is Church's role in the context of such a change? Does the Church stand as a mute spectator to these changes? What is its participation and involvement to strengthen its varied and multiple ministries? How does the church meet the challenges thrown at its very call and mission in Urban conditions ? What is the methodology being followed and what is the media the Church requires? Is the Church still adhere to its old traditions and practices with rigidity inspite of changes that bring into its life and work? Some such questions need to be raised and suitable solutions ought to be found.

New situations naturally bring new demands and challenges. The Church must be fully equipped to meet the challenges with new ideologies and strategies. The Church must evolve new approach altogether which is best suited to strengthen the ministry. It is necessary to work out a new method to reach people who are caught up at difficult situations.

There is always a sense of complacency in accepting certain realities that exist in urban life. It is good if we pin point certain areas for our better understanding of Christian Ministry in urban areas. There are many problems which Church alone may not solve with its limited resources. Yet it can make its presence felt in the community by undertaking some new ventures which will help the total community life. People expect church to play a vital role in promoting peace and harmony in a multi-faith society.

(1) Literate Vs illiterate

This area of urban life can change the situation basically in its complexities and bring values in living standards. Inspite of more educational facilities available, there is lot of illiteracy among the slum dwellers. The Church can make good contribution in this field of education, it can work out for the removal of illiteracy which may in time change the very life-styles of people in experiencing the values for further prospects and prosperity.

(2) Rich Vs Poor

Where the wealthy and rich enjoy the life, there is a lot of hunger and disease among the poor and there is a gulf created between people. There is always a room for discrimination between two classes of people, the rich becoming richer and poor becoming poorer. The life between the two is quite different in all walks of life. This is the situation that exists in whole of the country and also in the Church.

(3) Cultural

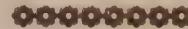
There are many dehumanising factors that affect people. People are drawn from different religions, caste and social backgrounds. The moral values have been plundered in many areas of life. The human rights have become valueless because of exploitation. This calls forth to the fore the values of justice and righteousness. The gap created between people due to cultural influence have to be carefully examined and tackled. There is always a sense of displacement of the poor from their cultural background. This can dislocate and affect the very social life of the people. Such situations create barriers and boundaries which cause misery.

(4) Plenty yet nothing

Urban life provides all kinds of facilities and infrastructure with all specialities in health, education, housing etc. But do the urban poor enjoy all these facilities. The education has become costly where the poor cannot afford to obtain admission as they have to shell down donations. So also in the field of health; the poor are deprived of getting necessary medical aid and assistance. It is the same everywhere. The urban poor dwell in slums and ghettos without any basic amenities.

(5) De-humanising factors

The Church is committed to free people from such situations to bring human dignity and human values (I Cor. 15:9:2). Many are the issues and problems which were mentioned by St. Paul to each and every congregation he established. The urban Church is placed in such a precarious situation. Therefore how does it combat with such evil things? The Church has to work for the salvation of the whole person with a holistic view and evolve such programmes and plans which may help in the long run to establish a better and healthy community life.



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News from all over

'Be generous with baptism'-archbishop's call prompts debate

By Cedric Pulford, London, 27 October (ENI)—The Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, has made Christian baptism a national issue by publicly criticising clergy who are unwilling to baptise the babies of parents who are not regular church-goers.

The church of England leader said in a recent speech at Wye Hall, Western England, that his church's mission was to the entire nation. Church members should not, he said, 'build too many barriers around church life'.

Archbishop Carey added a personal note to the debate, saying: 'I remain immensely grateful that the church to which my parents took me to be baptised did not turn them away on the grounds of their non-attendance on a Sunday. It was a generous church that received them and perceived the flickering faith they had.'

'I am concerned that the ways we treat those who rarely if ever come to our services should reflect the fact that the gospel is for them as well as for us,' Archbishop Carey said. 'Perhaps there is one word we need to recover these days in representing our faith. It is the word generosity'.

There are differing views within several churches over whether clergy should or should not refuse to baptise the children of people who have not regularly attended church services.

The issue is a contentious one in the Church of England, particularly for evangelicals, while Roman Catholic clergy are also becoming 'more and more demanding on attendance' as a requirement for baptism, according to a spokesman.

Another distinction made in the debate is whether non-church-going parents hold Christian beliefs or are clearly 'non-believers'.

A prominent evangelical in the Church of England this week described the practice of baptising children of non-believers as a farce. Mark Birchall, Chairman of the Evangelical Group on the Church of England's general synod, told ENI: 'Baptism involves making promises, and to baptise where there is no belief is inviting the parents to commit perjury'.

However Birchall said that most evangelical ministers would not simply turn away non-believers. 'Most evangelical ministers will accept those who are believers but non-attenders,' he said. 'A minority would put up hurdles by still not say no.'

The Church of England retains a strong though slowly declining hold over baptisms in England: of 639 000 live births in England in 1993, 160 000 (25 per cent) received an Anglican baptism, according to a church spokesman. The 1984 figure was 640 000 live births and 198 000 baptisms (30.9 per cent).

While some parents arrange baptisms for social rather than religious reasons, Church of England clergy cannot ultimately refuse the service. They may delay baptism, for example while the parents receive instruction in their obligations, but a legal right predating the Reformation allows all to be baptised into the church of the land.

Roman Catholic clergy too sometimes receive requests from parents seeking baptism for ulterior motives: usually children need to have been baptised to attend Roman Catholic state schools.

Gerry Slamon, a priest at the Catholic Media Office, said 'Most priests would be hesitant to proceed with baptism if parents don't belong to the church, but it would be seldom anyone is turned away point blank. That would be bad diplomacy as well as a courtesy'.

'Clergy are encouraged to see the situation as an opportunity rather than saying no-no-no.'

Martin Foster, of the Catholic Liturgy Office, said: 'Catholics would err towards baptising all and trusting in God's grace that parents will be able to meet their responsibilities'.

Even Baptists may be asked by parents to christen their children, Peter Wortley, a clergyman and chairman of council for the Baptist Union of Great Britain, told ENI. This was usually because they did not realise that Baptists practised only adult baptism.

He added: 'One would expect all ministers to see such a request as an evangelical and pastoral opportunity'.

The minister would probably talk with the parents at home, invite them to a service and ask them to attend a series of classes explaining the Christian faith.

A service within public worship thanking God for the child and giving the parents an opportunity to make public promises, might follow, he explained.

Baptists signal start of worldwide evangelisation campaign

Meghalaya, north-east India, 26th October (ENI)- The Baptist World Alliance (BWA) has claimed that more than 6000 people have adopted the Christian faith during six evening meetings held in north-east India state of Meghalaya over the past week.

The meetings, with average attendance of 25,000 each evening, were held by Nilson do Amaral Fanini, a pastor from the Brazilian Niteroi Baptist Church, who was elected president of the Baptist World'Alliance at its 17th world Congress, held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in August this year.

The meetings in Meghalaya were the first in a series of evangelistic gatherings around the world planned by Fanini, who has already declared that a worldwide evangelisation campaign will be the main focus of his five-year term as president.

Fanini is one of the most prominent church figures in Brazil, where his weekly sermons are broadcast by 52 radio stations and 110 television channels across the country, which has 6000 Baptist congregations with more than 2 million members.

Baptists in north-east India who helped organise the meetings over the past week believe that there are more than a billion people around the world who 'have yet to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ', the BWA said in a statement.

Tony Cupit, BWA's evangelism director, said that each of the six times that Fanini preached, more than 750 people responded to the invitation to follow Jesus Christ. 'Almost two-thirds of them came for the first time, so that at least 4000 of those who responded were first-time decisions,' Cupit said. The BWA had 125 trained people on hand to 'counsel' those who came forward each night.

'Definite and extensive follow-up will be done' by the local Baptist church, said cupit, who added that the names and addresses of the thousands of interested people had been recorded by Baptist officials. Most of those who came to the meetings were from the local Garo ethnic group.

Baptism for Sister Hong, aged 100

Taipei, 3 November (ENI)—A pastor in the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan has recently baptised a woman aged 100, Shei Tsai (née Hong) according to the latest issue of *Taiwan Church News*.

The pastor, Lee Yu-hsai, met 'Sister Hong', through a Christian neighbour. Many of Sister Hong's extended family are Christians and they had prayed that she would be baptised. The pastor described Sister Hong as 'a courageous and spirited woman, talkative and warm and

full of anecdotes'. Sister Hong is one of 'the few old women remaining who had had their feet bound in their youth'.

On the day of her baptism, Sister Hong's family gave her a cake with the number 100 on it in large figures. 'The number can be read two ways—from one direction, it did said one hundred, Hong's earthly age; from another direction it said '001', symbolising 'her new status as a brand-new child of God and her heavenly age,' *Taiwan Church News* said.

Sister Hong, who celebrated her 100th birthday in August, said of her baptism: 'If I can do it at 100, others can do it also.'

MEENA PRASHANTHAM RECEIVES DISTINGUISHED GRADUATE AWARD

Columbus, Ohio, USA Nov. 1, 1995 Meena Prashantham of Tamil Nadu, has been named a distinguished graduate by Trinity Lutheran Seminary. She was honored at the Alumni Banquet held at the seminary on October 18 where a Distinguished Alumna for Christian Service Award was presented in her name.

Mrs. Prashantham is a 1977 graduate of Trinity Lutheran Seminary where she received a Master of Arts in Theology degree.

Since 1978, she has been a counsellor at the Christian Counselling Centre in Tamil Nadu. She is also involved in training persons from India and from 25 other countries through the Centre's residential long term and short term courses in Psychological Counselling.

'Working towards the uplifting of women and children is another area that is close to my heart,' says Mrs. Prashantham.

In January of 1995 the Board of Directors for the Christian Counselling Centre named her as Acting Director. She takes the place of her husband, Dr. B.J. Prashantham, who was invited to be the Asia Representative for Kindernothilfe (KNH) Germany, which ministers to 70,000 children in several Asian countries. Dr. Prashantham, who received a Doctor of Ministry degree from Trinity in 1978, continues to serve the Counselling Centre as a consultant.

Trinity Lutheran Seminary is a graduate school of theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and is one of eight ELCA seminaries in the United States serving students from around the world. In addition to the Master of Divinity degree which prepares students for the ordained ministry, Trinity offers several two-year degrees. These include the Master of Theological Studies, the Master of Arts in Church Music and the Master of Arts in Lay Ministry. A Master of Sacred

Theology is also offered. Over 3000 Trinity graduates are serving in a variety of ministries throughout the United States and 25 countries.

Bill for S.C. Christians

The Prime Minister, Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao, has assured a delegation of Christian leaders that the Government would introduce a Bill seeking reservation to the Schedule Caste Christians, as provided to the SCs in Buddhism and Sikhism, during his session of Parliament.

Mr. Rao expressed anguish at the pathetic condition of the SC Christians and justified the demand, according to a statement by All India United Christians Movement for Equal Rights, a representative body which called on the Prime Minister on Thursday.

The leaders of the Movement said the Prime Minister felt that justice had been denied to the community and directed the Union Welfare Minister, Mr. Sitaram Kesri, to introduce the Bill during this session itself.

The delegation leaders, Archbishop Joseph Powathil, who is also the chairman of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, informed the Prime Minister that the entire Christian community in the country was upset over the inordinate delay in extending equal justice to the dalit Christians in spite of repeated assurances by Prime Ministers and Union Welfare Ministers in the past.

The delegation included Bishop Lawrence Mar Epharem, Mr. P.C. Thomas, Mr. P.C. Chacko, Mr. K.M. Matthew, Mr. R. Dhanuskodi Athithan and Mr. Ajit P.K. Jogi, all MPs. The delegation was also joined by the Union Minister of State for Non-conventional energy, Mr. S. Krishna Kumar.

—N.C.C.I.R. Sep. 95

Europe's biggest mosque opens in Rome

Europe's biggest mosque was opened the lower slopes of Mont' Antenna, on the left bank of the Tiber, just 10 minutes drive from the Vatican, on 22nd June.

Pope John Paul II praised the establishment in Rome of the mosque, which occupies a site of 30,000 square meters, donated by the Rome City Council and has a prayer hall big enough for 2,000 worshippers. But the Pope also used the opportunity to remind the world that some Islamic countries do not share the liberty of religion that is evident in the Eternal City.

Rome, which is also home to Europe's most ancient Jewish community, officially has 38,000 Muslim residents, making them the city's second biggest religious community. Italy has a total of 300,000 Muslim residents and many smaller mosques. Rome's Chief Rabbi, Elio Toaff, said after the opening of the mosque that the right to meet and pray together 'cannot be denied to any religion'.

Islam's Victory Over Communism

Islam, one of the five major religions in China, spread from the Arab world to China in 651, 1340 years ago. To date, there are more than 10 million believers of Islam among 10 Chinese national minorities, according to 'News from China', released here by the Embassy of the people's Republic of China.

On August 25, 651, the first envoy of the Caliph arrived in Chang'an, today's Xian. He held an audience with Emperor Gaozong and explained the Islamic doctrine.

However, some historians engaged in the study of Islam hold that the religion was brought into China by Arabian merchants prior to the year 651. According to Prof. Yang Huaizhong, with the Religious Research Institute under the Ningxia Academy of Social sciences, business contacts between China and the Arabian countries were the key factors leading to the dissemination of Islam into China.

Starting from the mid-7th century, Arabs and Persians, believers in Islam came to China through ancient land and marine Silk roads to conduct business. Some of them later became permanent residents in some prosperous cities, where they built mosques and cemeteries. The renowned Huaisheng Mosque in Guangzhou and Phoenix Mosque in Hangzhou were first constructed in the Tang dynasty.

In the early 13th century, Genghis Khan the Mongolian leader and founder of the Yuan Dynasty (1206-1368) launched a large-scale eastward expedition. During the period, hundreds of thousands of Central Asian, Persian and Arabic Muslims immigrated to China.

The offspring of the Central and West Asians assimilated with the Han and Mongolian people in the Yuan Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties and gradually evolved into the Hui ethnic group, retaining their belief in Islam.

Statistics offered by the Islamic Association of China demonstrate that China now boasts 30,000 imams and 30,000 mullahs. Islam is the dominant religion among 10 Chinese national minorities—namely the Hui, Uygur, Kazak, Kirgiz, Tajik, Uzbek, Tatar, Longxiang, Salary and Bonan.

Financial support for Chinese mosques chiefly comes from individual donations, earnings from house properties and government allocation for maintenance of mosques. In recent years, some mosques have launched their own businesses to increase earnings.

In China, a mosque is managed by a democratic administrative committee, which comprises a director, a deputy director and a certain number of members elected by local Muslims.

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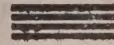
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